



La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council
System-Building Themes and Priorities from Key Informant Interviews

Service Coordination

Continued efforts are needed to increase the number of cross-provider (health, family support and early learning) networking and information sharing opportunities in the region to raise awareness of existing resources and improve referral systems. Examples include annual all-county meetings, quarterly informational lunches, and monthly community-based networking and information sharing meetings. Also, increase the number of regional meetings taking place in La Paz County to improve attendance and provider buy-in; and improve communication between tribal and county agencies so that families inside and outside of tribal lands have knowledge of and access to all available support services in the region.

- Frequent staff-turnover is an issue for many programs in the region.
- Stakeholders often noted the need to ensure all childhood professionals in the region have information available to disseminate on the importance and availability of various services.
- Networking and collaborative efforts have stalled, not moving from brainstorming to planning and implementation phases.
- Funding mechanisms should require partnering to support collaboration and sustainability.
- Provide healthcare services and family support resources through child care and early learning centers, e.g. flu shots, immunizations, dental exams and fluoride varnish application...
- Partner with health departments and local communities to provide more ongoing immunization clinics, and health, dental, hearing and vision screenings at schools, child care centers, and other local community sites.
- Increase wrap-around support for health and early learning programs. This could be increased linkages and coordination between 1) primary care and specialty care, 2) primary care and other healthcare services in the community or farther afield, 3) primary care and family support programs in the community, 4) primary care and transportation providers, or 5) preschool and child care programs. Need to partner between agencies and organizations to inter-refer and build a referral system.

Community Outreach and Awareness

Data points to an information deficit among families and early childhood professionals in the region. Continued efforts are needed to increase outreach to churches, businesses, and service organizations in a position to share information with their members. More outreach is needed from agency to agency, and from agencies to families, about what is available. This can be done through health and community fairs, local resource guides, referral networks, radio and print media, and social networks. Local, city-level boards and coalitions can help lead and foster these efforts.

- Frequent staff-turnover is an issue for many programs in the region.
- Stakeholders report a lack of knowledge of available programs and services among families and among service providers alike is a barrier to routine referral and coordination.
- Stakeholders discussed the need to educate parents on the importance of parenting and family support for their child's development. This could be achieved by incorporating family support and resources into community events like family fun days, fairs and play groups, existing events such as family nights at schools, events at casinos, or safety nights at the fire department, and inclusion of information in local guides, radio and print media, and social networks.
- Stakeholders often noted the need to ensure all childhood professionals in the region have information available to disseminate on the importance and availability of support services.
- A one-stop resource for early childhood information was suggested, be it an individual, a location, a publication or a website, with local, city or town-level information.
- Stakeholders noted that supportive communities and school boards have been key to some school's ability to offer, maintain and expand early learning programs in times of limited funding.



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- Educating older community members on the importance of early education is needed to impact funding and program support in a region with large retirement-aged populations. This can counteract the common question, “When I was a kid we didn’t have this, so why do we need it now?”

Home Visiting

Continued efforts are needed to reduce duplication of home visitation services; better coordinate care for families; address application fatigue; and improve referral mechanisms, especially in Lake Havasu, Bullhead and Kingman. The possibility of offering additional support services targeted to more remote areas should also be explored.

- The available slots for a number of home visitation programs in the region point to a need to raise awareness and increase uptake of existing programs.
- Mileage limitations influence which families can participate in home visitation services.
- Confusion is caused by multiple agencies providing the same program model (Parents as Teachers) in Bullhead and Kingman. Service providers are unsure which program to refer to.
- In La Paz County and in remote areas of Mohave County, access to home visitation is limited.
- There continues to be “turf issues” among home visiting provider agencies, often due to competition for funding or clients, which inhibits the effective collaboration and coordination needed to meet the needs of families with young children in the region.
- Six out of 10 areas in the region have a higher percentage of grandparents raising their grandchildren than the state as a whole. Additional resources for grandparents, coupled with efforts to increase awareness of existing resources, may add to the pool of support services available to these grandparents. This may include resources for children with incarcerated parents, as incarceration may be a reason why children are living with their grandparents.
- Examine eligibility conditions for home visitation (geographic limits) and parenting programs (AHCCCS enrolled or involvement in child welfare) to determine if such criteria are necessary.

Professional Development and Training

Continued efforts are needed to address the dearth of mental health professionals who are qualified to work with young children and trained in trauma-based therapy. Additional degree and certification programs should be offered and promoted in the region to prepare the future local workforce, in particular, coursework in mental health services and child welfare.

- Frequent staff-turnover is an issue for many programs in the region.
- Stakeholders often noted the lack of mental health providers and speech, occupational and physical therapists, qualified to work with young children.
- A number of concerns were raised about the quality of providers within the region. Mental health and child welfare providers were often seen to be uncertified, underqualified, or inexperienced, and there was seen to be a lack of therapists with expertise working with young children and families and knowledgeable in trauma-based therapy.
- Additional training and cross-training is needed for preschool teachers, child care providers and health and support service providers in the basics of trauma and the needs of children in the child welfare system and how to recognize potential warning signs. Offering these training opportunities in more locations than the three large cities in Mohave County is also advised.
- Work with partners to help address the lack of foster care placements and inconsistent training of foster parents in the region; multiple agencies oversee and train foster parents in the region.
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- Address agency barriers to supporting their staff's attendance at training events (e.g. requiring staff to use PTO to attend trainings during work hours).
- Offer additional training and cross-training on children's healthcare topics, such as developmental milestones and mental health and special needs topics, and how to address behavior issues, so that those in early education or child care centers are more aware of when referrals might be advised.

Transportation

Transportation to access services in larger cities, or metropolitan areas, is needed.

- Stakeholders often noted that transportation is a large barrier as many communities in Mohave and La Paz Counties are far removed from health, early learning and family support resources.
- Partner to provide transportation to parenting education and other family support events.
- Explore options for partnering to provide transportation between half-day district and Head Start programs and child care centers. The lack of transportation between these settings is a large barrier to utilizing these services for working families.
- Increase web-access to regional meetings to address time and transportation issues.

Framing

- Stakeholders often discussed the importance of supporting the whole family, including providing information and referrals on a number of services such as job training, food assistance, financial and housing assistance and AHCCCS enrollment help.
- Stakeholders emphasized the need for an increased focus on prevention. Family support programs should focus first on preventing the issues that lead to the need for crisis support, and foster an environment of support and openness among families and providers.
- Stakeholders identified a need for increased focus on preventative health services, and for education about what routine health care should be for children. They felt that there was a need to directly address the sense families have that, "If my child isn't sick, why should I go to the doctor?"
- Reframe parenting education, home visitation and family support services to be less likely to imply a deficit that needs to be addressed, and instead as a support to enhance good parenting.
- Language barriers and cultural issues are an obstacle to family support services, including the stigma associated with family support. Many families perceive that these services are for "bad" parents.
- Stakeholders identified a common misperception of families, that home visitation programs are only for low income families or those involved with the child welfare system. This misperception likely affects receipt of and participation in home visitation programs.
- There is a need to incorporate preschool into the "school" vernacular to increase acceptance, and impress upon parents and leaders the impact that a quality preschool program can have on kindergarten readiness.
- Early childhood education is not perceived as being a priority issue among some in the region as evidenced by common sentiments such as, "I did fine without preschool," and "learning begins in kindergarten."

Other Barriers

- Political beliefs and a strong culture of self-reliance affect availability of and access to programs.
- Immigration status may be a reason families chose not to participate in family support programs.
- Not having bilingual child care and early learning staff can affect some family's utilization of these services, although finding well-qualified staff who are also bilingual can be difficult.



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- Both city-level community development efforts and district/agency-level recruitment and retention incentives are needed to increase the number of qualified workers who move into and stay in the region, particularly in the fields of mental health and special needs services. Also in early childhood education.
- Expanded hours and days of care for a variety of child care and early learning programs are needed to increase working parents' options for accessing these programs and services.

Services for Children with Special Needs

- Establish a specialist coordination group educated on the needs of the local population. Include early intervention agencies and programs, as well as health care providers and early childhood educators. Hold ongoing meetings (with web-access option) to share information on programs/services, and allow client-based discussion, problem-solving and referral. (Sounds like Special Needs Advocacy Coalition.)

Competing for limited funds

- Partner to seek funding for additional early care and education services like Head Start and Early Head Start. Include First Things First, Head Start, school districts and private preschools and child care centers, as well as the business and medical community in these collaborations.